PICTURE FRAMING—AN ART

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LESSON NINETEEN

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The framing of pictures is as old as art itself. The Egyptians of Pharaoh's days understood the value of a border for their fresco paintings, and indicated a frame by painting a black or brick-red line around the panel they wished to make the dominant part in a mural decoration.

Examples have been found in the fresco paintings of the Greeks and even some of their bas-reliefs were framed in fret work or friezes.

It was left to the masters of painting in the mediaeval days to originate frames to enhance the beauty of a canvas. The birth of the picture frame industry took place and oil paintings were framed in heavy gilded frames. This, however, was overdone, and gaudy examples of picture frames are found to this day.

The frames of the XVII and XIX centuries, although somewhat gaudy, were very much lighter in their design. It was left for the Japanese to design frames, so thin and unpretentious that they would not detract from the picture itself.

A frame should help the appearance of a painting through the careful selection of its moulding and color, and should be chosen for qualities that will wear. Bronzed mouldings will chip and show displeasing white spots, and should be avoided. The cheap novelty frame with brass corners bears the stamp of bad taste.

HANGING PICTURES: THEIR RELATION TO EACH OTHER

The question of selecting pictures framed and ready to hang, and their arrangement on the wall space, is worthy of your careful attention.

Large frames of original paintings will be worth the space even to the detriment of their surroundings, but reproductions in elaborate frames of large proportions are out of place in the home of refinement.

The arrangement of pictures should be simplicity itself. If you study the diagram A, shown on Plate 1, you will note at a glance the poor taste displayed. The pictures are placed on the wall haphazardly, with a total disregard for spacing, balance, or rhythm. B is a diagram of the same pictures, which is pleasing through a carefully planned arrangement. They are tastefully hung and overcrowding has been avoided. The result is obvious.

I will lay stress upon the careful selection of pictures or prints. Small reproductions of good paintings are far better than large prints of a mediocre subject of doubtful composition and gaudy coloring. A black and white print, whether an etching, a photogravure, or an engraving made by some artist of renown, is preferable to an oil painting of obscure merit.

One picture of a small size will be hung by itself, and will suffice for space between doors or windows. Overcrowding of the walls should be avoided as much as the overcrowding of the furnishings in a room.

One very inexpensive and attractive way to frame prints is to "passe-partout" them. This method is quite popular among artists and designers, inasmuch as prints may be framed in a very attractive manner by this means. The name "Passe-partout" is a French word, meaning "Goes-everywhere." As the name implies, pictures framed in that manner will fit anywhere, owing to their unpretentious appearance.

The right size glass having been selected, a piece of cardboard is cut the exact size of the glass, and the print inserted between the two in sandwich fashion, as it were. The glass, print and cardboard are securely fastened with narrow strips of gummed paper.

SIMPLE TOOLS USED FOR FRAMING

A miter box, a sharp, fine saw, a glue pot, sandpaper and nails are the only tools needed to proceed with the work.

Miter Box. A miter box may be made at home and if the following instructions are followed it should be "true" enough to do any plain framing.

Get three small boards about 15 inches long, 3 inches wide, and about ½ inch thick, care being taken to have them planed square all around the edges. Glue and nail two of these boards flush on the two sides of the third board in a vertical position. Take a square and draw a pencil line on the top of the two vertical boards a short distance from the end.

Measure the exact height of one of the side pieces and lay that measurement to the right of the pencil mark previously traced, and draw a line in the same fashion as the one drawn previously.

Then draw a cross from the four points thus obtained and continue the lines along the two sides. The miter box is ready to be cut, care being taken to use the same saw for cutting that you intend to use in the mitering of your frame mouldings.

On Plate 2, Fig. 5, you will find an illustration which will give you a clearer understanding of this very necessary tool.

NOTE:—Any good carpenter will make a miter box for you.

Cutting the Moulding. In estimating the amount of moulding necessary to frame a picture allow enough for the four sides plus eight times the width of the moulding you are going to buy; e. g., if your picture is 9″ x 12″ you will need 42 inches as a start. Then if the moulding which you intend to buy is one-half inch wide, you will need an additional 4 inches —making 46 inches in all. It will be well to buy about 47 inches.

To cut the moulding, place it in the mitre box. Place your saw diagonally through two of the slits and cut off one corner of the moulding. Do not waste any. It is now necessary to measure off the amount required for one side. This must be one-half inch shorter than the picture itself. Start measuring from that edge of the moulding that had its corner taken off. Place a pencil mark at the cutting point. Now put your saw diagonally through the other slit. In other words reverse its position, so that when you saw off the second end its slant will not be parallel to the first end. Continue this process in cutting the other sides, remembering to make each one one-half inch shorter than the picture itself.

Glue Pot. The glue pot to use may be purchased from any local hardware store, and is known as a cabinet-maker's glue pot. The glue is to be heated in that pot and the corners of the frame glued while the glue is hot. Any good furniture glue will answer the purpose. It is advisable to glue one corner of the frame at a time, and let stand until dry in the manner described below. When the two opposite corners are perfectly dry they may be placed together and then nailed. It is well to place a brad or nail part way in each moulding before glueing. As soon as the glue is applied, drive the nail in to hold the two surfaces together till the glue sets.

The nails known as finishing nails are preferably used in this work as they have no head and will hold well. Fine sandpaper is to be used to remove any raw edge or roughness after the frame is made and the glue perfectly dry. The nail holes on the corners may be filled with putty or furniture cement.

THE MOUNTING OF PRINTS

There are two ways of mounting prints. One is to cut an opening in a piece of cardboard, and to paste the print on an inner piece of cardboard, so that the print will show through the opening. This will form a "mat" or border all around the print.

The second method is to place the print flatly on the board, holding it in place by putting a small amount of paste close to the upper edge. The first method is preferable to the latter, inasmuch as it will give the mounting of that print a finished and pleasing appearance.

To glue the print over its entire surface often causes wrinkles or bubbles to appear in the print. The glass will amply suffice to hold the print smoothly in place against it. Some hand tinted or painted pictures are so delicate as to allow but very little handling. I will recommend this method as the easier of the two:

To cut a mat a very sharp knife is necessary as the edges of the opening must be sharply cut and preferably on a bevel. At first a straightedge or a rule will be found convenient tools, but with practice a thin pencil line may be accurately followed by hand.

PROPORTIONS OF MARGINS

The right width of margins requires quite a little thought and study. The upper and side margins should be of the same size, whilst the lower margin should be made a little wider. (See Plate 2, Figs. 1 and 2.) This principle will be applied to oblong and square pictures as well.

In the framing of panel pictures, the upper margin should be wider than the margins on the two sides, whilst the margin at the bottom should be wider than any of the three first mentioned (Fig. 4). The Japanese are our masters in this manner of framing panel pictures. They use a very narrow moulding for the frame, usually made of teakwood—a native wood black in color, but also other woods stained a pure black.

For the mounting of small and rare prints, an unusually wide margin will be found a medium to enhance their beauty, and do honor to their makers. I found striking examples of this method (Fig. 3), in the different exhibits of etchings it was my privilege to attend in Europe and this country. The rooms devoted to the Etching Art at the Art Institute of Chicago contain many rare prints which are mounted in this fashion. The white mat and the thin frames of ivory finish or white enamel do not detract from the prints in the least but make them more effective.

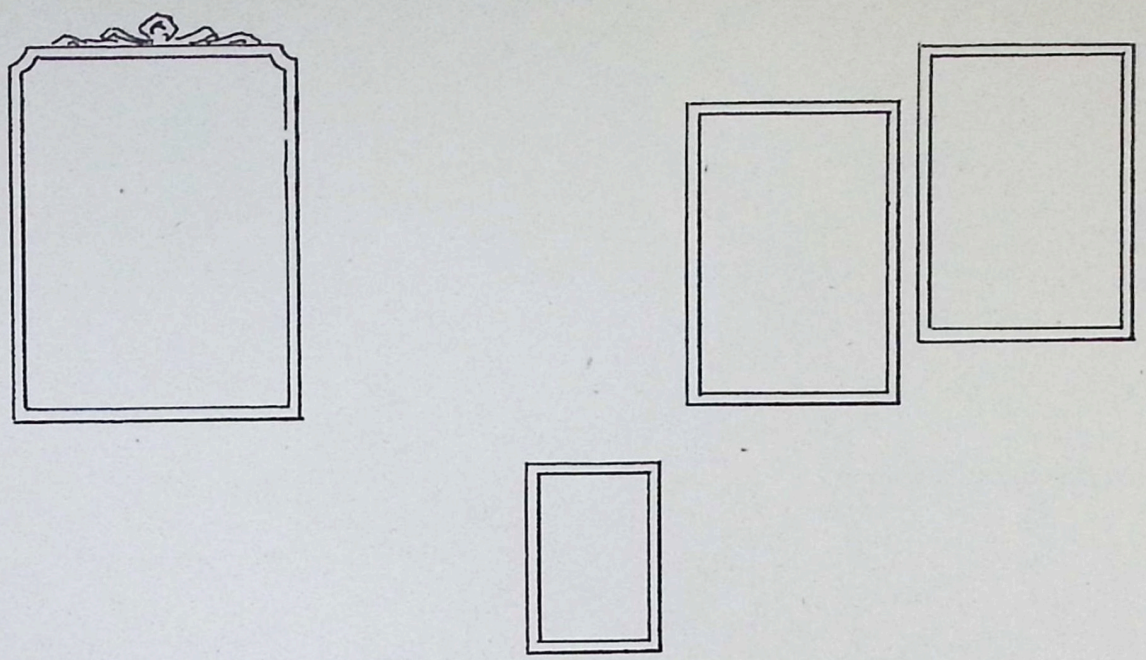
A white mat may be used with advantage in the mountings of all prints. Colored mat board must be used very sparingly. Oil paintings require only a wide, deep frame to enhance their beauty. Water color paintings require a mat, but I will again suggest a white mat as the best one to use. A thin plain moulding finished in a mat gold will be desirable. In Plate 2 will be found a few sketches that will help you in securing the right proportions of margins as applied to picture framing.

In our materials catalog you will find a list of most attractive prints in colors, which we can offer you at very advantageous prices. I would suggest that you secure at least a dozen of these prints in assortment, and frame them to hang in your studio or shop for sale.

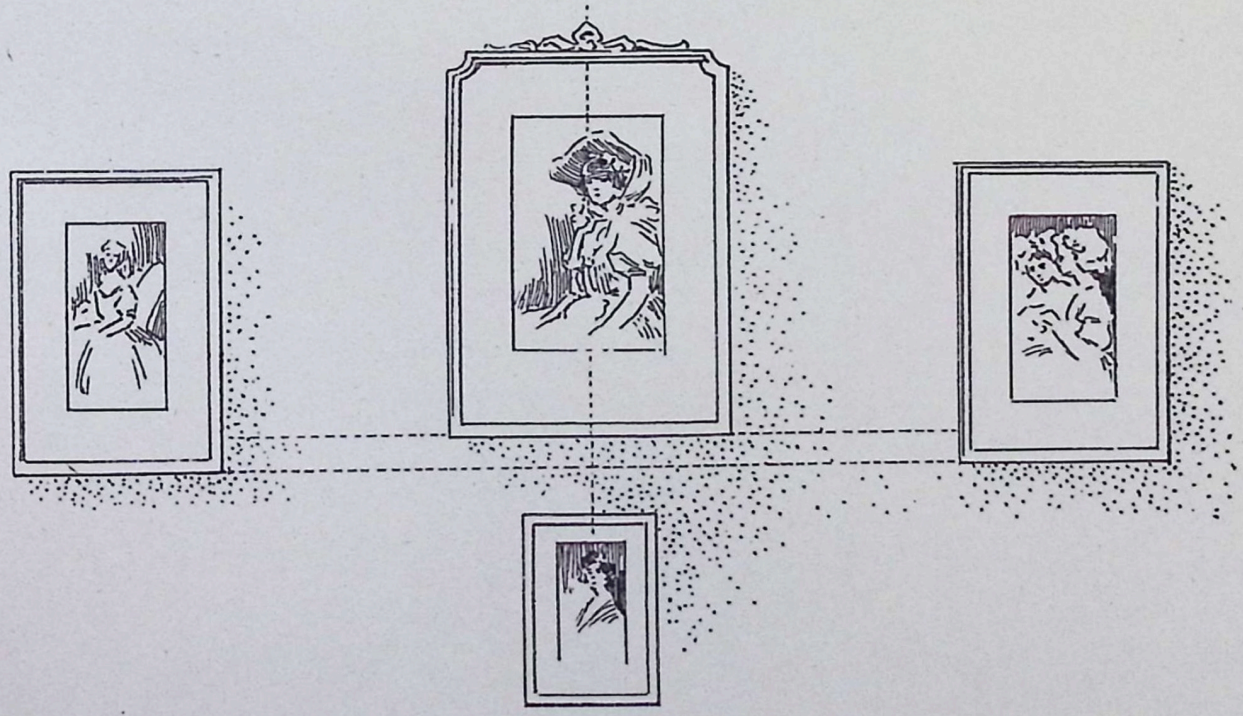
The plates accompanying this lesson are simply reference plates for you to study.

Gabriel André Petit.

The ARRANGEMENT of PICTURES. . .



A. Faulty arrangement.



B. Pleasing display.

Lesson 19. Pl. 1 ©

PROPORTIONS of MARGINS.



Fig. 1

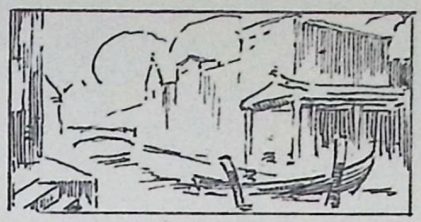


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Etchings should be allowed generous margins...

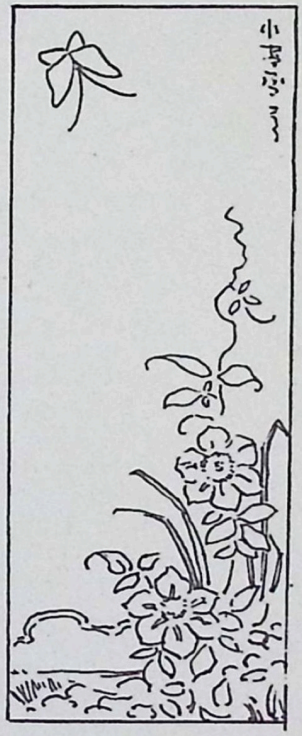
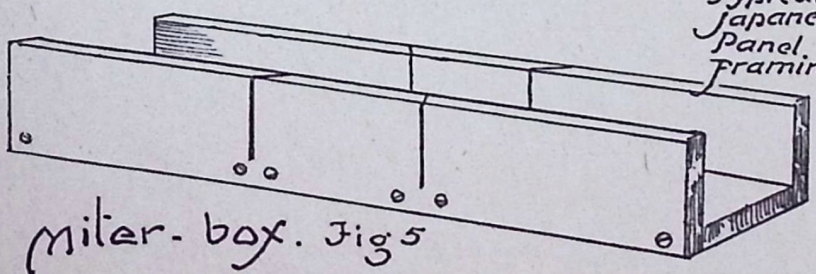


Fig. 4



Typical Japanese Panel Framing.

Miter-box. Fig 5

Lesson 19
Pl. 2

©

"Many members begin decorating giftwares and objets d'art after finishing only a few lessons. Others prefer to finish more lessons and more subjects in order to decorate giftwares in a greater variety and in a more salable manner. In any case you should finish at least six or more lessons before requesting the lessons which have to do with merchandising and how to make money. These lessons will be sent to you automatically when you have finished the tenth lesson on the subject of Enameling Furniture. The lessons on merchandising or how to make money are numbered as follows: 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 20, 23, 26, and 28."

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